

336. The method of Claim 315 wherein the nucleic acid is double-stranded and hybridization with the oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles results in the production of a triple-stranded complex.

337. A method of detecting a nucleic acid having at least two portions comprising:

(a) contacting the nucleic acid with a substrate having oligonucleotides attached thereto, the oligonucleotides having a sequence complementary to a first portion of the sequence of said nucleic acid, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the oligonucleotides on the substrate with said nucleic acid;

(b) contacting said nucleic acid bound to the substrate with a first type of nanoparticle-oligonucleotide conjugates according to any one of Claims 237-240, at least one of the types of oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the conjugates having a sequence complementary to a second portion of the sequence of said nucleic acid, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the conjugates with said nucleic acid; and

(c) observing a detectable change.

338. The method of Claim 337 further comprising:

(d) contacting the first type of nanoparticle-oligonucleotide conjugates bound to the substrate with a second type of nanoparticle-oligonucleotide conjugates according to any one of Claims 237-240, at least one of the types of oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the second type of conjugates having a sequence complementary to the sequence of one of the types of oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the first type of conjugates, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the first and second types of conjugates; and

(e) observing the detectable change.

339. The method of Claim 338 wherein at least one of the types of oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the first type of conjugates has a sequence complementary to the sequence of at least one of the types of oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the second type of conjugates and the method further comprises:

(f) contacting the second type of conjugates bound to the substrate with the first type of conjugates, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the first and second types of conjugates; and

(g) observing the detectable change.

340. The method of Claim 339 wherein step (d) or steps (d) and (f) are repeated one or more times and the detectable change is observed.

341. The method of Claim 337 further comprising:

(d) providing a type of binding oligonucleotides having a sequence comprising at least two portions, the first portion being complementary to at least one of the types of oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the first type of conjugates;

(e) contacting the binding oligonucleotides with the first type of conjugates bound to the substrate, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the binding oligonucleotides with the oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the first type of conjugates;

(f) providing a second type of nanoparticle-oligonucleotide conjugates according to any one of Claims 237-240, at least one of the types of oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the second type of conjugates having a sequence complementary to the second portion of the sequence of the binding oligonucleotides;

(g) contacting the binding oligonucleotides bound to the substrate with the second type of conjugates, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow

hybridization of the oligonucleotides attached to the nanoparticles of the second type of conjugates with the binding oligonucleotides; and

(h) observing the detectable change.

342. The method of Claim 341 further comprising:

(i) contacting the second type of conjugates bound to the substrate with the binding oligonucleotides, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the binding oligonucleotides with the oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the second type of conjugates;

(j) contacting the binding oligonucleotides bound to the substrate with the first type of conjugates, the contacting taking place under conditions effective to allow hybridization of the oligonucleotides on the nanoparticles of the first type of conjugates with the binding oligonucleotides; and

(k) observing the detectable change.

343. The method of Claim 342 wherein steps (e) and (g) or steps (e), (g), (i) and (j) are repeated one or more times, and the detectable change is observed.

344. The method of Claim 337 wherein the substrate is a transparent substrate or an opaque white substrate.

345. The method of Claim 344 wherein the detectable change is the formation of dark areas on the substrate.

346. The method of Claim 337 wherein the nanoparticles of the conjugates are metal nanoparticles or semiconductor nanoparticles.